

Words and Terms to Know

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) uses words and terms that might be unfamiliar to parents and community groups. Using a number of sources, this glossary has been developed to increase parent and community understanding of the legal and educational terminology used in the act. Terms that refer to Washington state's own school reform initiatives also are included. Special thanks to the Public Education Network for use of this glossary. Sources consulted in compiling this glossary are:

- Education Week
- National Center for Research on Evaluation
- National Coalition of Education Activists (NCEA)
- National Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing (CREST)
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Partnership for Learning (PFL)
- Public Education Network (PEN)
- U.S. Department of Education (USDOE)

Academic standards

The information, ideas, and facts students are supposed to learn in a particular grade comprise academic standards. In Washington state, these are known as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements or EALRs.

Accountability System

Each state sets academic standards for what every child should know and learn. Academic achievement is measured every year. The results of these annual tests are reported to the public. (U.S. Department of Education)

Achievement Gap

Differences in academic performance among groups are often identified racially, ethnically, and by income levels. In the United States, white students tend to outperform children of color; and wealthier students often do better than poorer ones, creating an "achievement gap." (NCEA)

Achievement Levels

Student achievement on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is reported by achievement level. These achievement levels are also consistent with definitions under NCLB. There are four achievement levels:

Level 1/ Below Basic — Students performing at this level do not demonstrate sufficient mastery of skills and abilities in the subject.

Level 2/ Basic — Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of skills and abilities in the subject.

Level 3/ Proficient — Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of skills and abilities in the subject.

Level 4/ Advanced — Students performing at this level exceed the standard in the subject beyond that required to be proficient.

Adequate yearly progress

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year. All students must reach "proficiency" by 2014 under NCLB. (U.S. Department of Education)

Alignment

State standards are "aligned" to classroom instruction and the WASL to ensure that students have actually been taught the material they are tested on. This alignment process provides a more accurate picture of student learning.

Alternative assessments

Alternative assessments are ways, other than standardized tests, to get information about what students know and where they may need help, such as oral reports or discussions, projects, performances, and experiments. (NCEA)

Alternative certification

Most teachers are required to have both a four-year college degree in education and state certification before they can enter the classroom. No Child Left Behind encourages states to offer other methods of qualification that allow talented individuals to teach subjects they have expertise in. (U.S. Department of Education)

Assessments

Assessment is another word for “test.”

Benchmark

A benchmark is a detailed description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades or developmental levels. Benchmarks are often represented by samples of student work. A set of benchmarks can be used as checkpoints to monitor progress in meeting performance goals within and across grade levels. (CRESST)

Bilingual education

Bilingual education is an in-school program for students whose first language is not English or who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Bilingual education provides instruction to help the student develop their English language skills and, until the student has gained greater fluency skills in English, subject area instruction in the student’s native language. (NCEA)

Certificate of Mastery

The Certificate of Mastery (CoM) will serve as evidence that Washington students have achieved the state’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The class of 2008 will be the first class required to demonstrate achievement of the reading, writing and math standards as measured by the 10th-grade WASL as part of Washington’s diploma requirements. Science will be added in 2010. Students will also have to meet local school and district graduation requirements. (OSPI and PFL)

Classroom-based assessments

The most frequently used assessments are classroom tests prepared by teachers. These can take the form of brief, informal quizzes or more formal – midterms or final exams – that cover a longer period of class work.

Corrective action

When a school or school district – which is in need of improvement – continues not making AYP (Step 3 for schools and Step1 for districts), it will be

subject to a corrective action plan. The plan will include resources to improve teaching, administration or curriculum. If the school or school district does not improve, then the federal law authorizes additional changes to ensure improvement. (U.S. Department of Education)

Criterion-referenced tests

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is an example of a criterion-referenced test. These tests measure students’ performance against set standards. The WASL, for example, measures whether students have learned the specific skills, concepts, facts and ideas found in Washington’s academic standards (the EALRs), not how they have performed against fellow Washington students or their peers nationally. By using a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions, the WASL allows for a deeper assessment of important skills and knowledge found in the state standards. (See also *norm-referenced tests*.) (OSPI and PFL)

Curriculum alignment

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning is designed to measure student performance in meeting the state’s academic standards, as described in the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRS). Washington schools have undergone a process to align their curriculum to the state standards so that students are actually taught the material they will be tested on.

Disaggregated data

To “disaggregate” means to separate a whole into its parts. In education, this term means that test results are sorted by groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for their child’s school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing. (U.S. Department of Education)

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRS)

Washington’s academic standards, known as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements, describe the specific knowledge and skills in various core subjects that students are expected to learn as they progress through school. Washington teachers were the primary developers of these standards.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

This is the primary federal law affecting K–12 education. ESEA is reauthorized by Congress every six years. It is also referred to as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the name given to the law by the Bush administration when the law was reauthorized in January 2002. (U.S. Department of Education)

Highly qualified teacher

The new federal education law defines a “highly qualified teacher” as one who has obtained full state teacher certification **or** has passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state; holds a minimum of a bachelor’s degree; and has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher instructs. (NCLB)

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Also known as mainstreaming. (NCEA)

Instruction

Instruction refers to the methods teachers use to instruct students. Common methods are lecture, discussion, hands-on activities, exercise, experiment, role-playing, small group work, and writing assessments. The most effective teachers use many methods because not all are effective with all students. (NCEA)

Limited English Proficient

Limited English Proficient refers to students for whom English is a second language and who are not at (LEP) grade level in reading and writing English. (NCEA)

Local education agency (LEA)

An LEA is a term used by the federal education law to describe a public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, school district, or other political subdivision. The Kent School District is an example of an LEA. (U.S. Department of Education)

Norm-referenced tests

The goal of these tests is to learn how students compare to each other by measuring their scores against an average national score. Norm-referenced tests are scores using a national curve in which half of the students receive a score above 50 percent

and half below. The comparison group is called the “norm,” explaining why these tests are generally comprised of multiple choice and/or true-false questions. Norm-reference tests such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are used in Washington state in addition to the WASL, a criterion-referenced test.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is the Washington state department of education. It is the primary state agency charged with overseeing K-12 education, led by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Terry Bergeson.

Opportunity to Learn

A term used to describe efforts to close the learning gap between the most and the least privileged students, ensuring all students and staff have the resources they need to be successful at high levels. (PEN and NCEA)

Parental involvement

Parental involvement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students’ academic learning and other school activities. The involvement includes ensuring that parents play an integral role in their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees. (NCLB)

Performance standards

Performance standards represent what a student is supposed to know and do by the end of a particular grade. (NCEA)

Public engagement

Public engagement is the sustained and active involvement of parents, community members, and taxpayers in the improvement of schooling and efforts to reform schools. (Education Week)

Public school choice

Under NCLB Title I, schools that have not made AYP for two consecutive years must inform parents of their options for transferring their child to a school that is not in school improvement. Schools must use a portion of their Title I funds to pay for transportation costs. (U.S. Department of Education)

School improvement plan (SIPs)

As part of Washington’s education reform efforts, schools must create school improvement plans

describing their vision for raising student achievement. These improvement plans use assessment data to identify strengths and weaknesses, helping schools set goals and priorities such as focusing on developing strong reading skills in kindergarten through third grade or boosting scores in math. Research shows success does not just happen. Schools that have shown significant gains on the WASL have a clear plan for improvement and target their resources to achieve their goals. These plans also help schools communicate to parents and community members their vision for raising student achievement and how they can best support these efforts. (OSPI)

Schoolwide programs

Schoolwide programs use Title I money to support comprehensive school improvement efforts and help all students, particularly low-achieving and at-risk students, meet state standards at particular schools. To qualify as a Title I schoolwide program, at least 40 percent of a school's students must be considered low-income. Schoolwide programs provide Title I services/support to all of the children in the school, regardless of income level. (PEN)

Scientifically based research

Research that involves the application of rigorous, systemic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities/programs. (U.S. Department of Education)

State education agency (SEA)

Under the federal education law, the state education agency is the agency primarily responsible for the supervision of a state's public elementary and secondary schools. In Washington state, it is the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Supplemental services

Students from low-income families who are attending schools that have been identified as "in need of school improvement" for at least three years will be eligible to receive outside tutoring or academic assistance. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state-approved providers. The school district will be required to use a portion of its Title I funds to pay for the services. (U.S. Department of Education)

Title I

Title I is the nation's largest federal education program, with a 2002 funding level of \$10.4 billion. Created in 1965 during the War on Poverty, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as the No Child Left Behind Act) provides remedial education programs to poor and disadvantaged children in nearly every school district in the country. Amendments to the law in 1994 were designed to tie the program to schoolwide and districtwide reforms based on challenging academic standards. Title I was formerly known as "Chapter 1." (Education Week)

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning is a criterion-referenced test that measures students' performance against set standards. The WASL, for example, measures whether students have learned the specific skills, concepts, facts and ideas found in Washington's academic standards (EALRs), not how they have performed against fellow Washington students or their peers nationally. By using a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions, the WASL allows for a deeper assessment of important skills and knowledge found in the state standards. (OSPI)